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STATEMENT TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

January 20, 2000

I want to thank the Department of Energy for holding this and other hearings on the proposal to ship irradiated fuel rods from over one hundred nuclear power reactors around the country to a permanent burial site in Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

1 This sounds to me like a disaster waiting to happen. When we dropped the first atomic bomb, the purpose seemed good: it would hasten the end of World War II and save many American lives. It accomplished both those goals, but the world will never be the same again. Perhaps our good intentions did not justify the results. When we tried to create something good out of the devastation caused by atomic bombs, we developed nuclear power that was cleaner and cheaper than the fuel we had to import from the Middle East. That technique caught on rapidly and our energy problems seemed to have been resolved. Between Chernobyl and the Love Canal, we learned that such power plants were not necessarily safe. No new power plants have been built or ordered since 1973, when we apparently realized the new threat we had created. I am proud that Missouri has only one nuclear power plant. Union Electric built another, then realized its mistake and shut it down. Personally, I think they should all be shut down.

1 continued As fuel rods piled up, we have been trying to find a method to contain them and a safe place to bury them. I'm urging you to take all the time you need. The temptation is great to bury those rods, and it must seem urgent because we're running out of space on the sites of the power plants. Let us not make more well-intentioned mistakes. How can we be sure that the contamination of 2.3 million atom bombs, concentrated in one place, will be safely contained forever? 2 To St. Louis, it poses an additional threat. Trucks and trains are generally reliable but, sooner or later, an accident will happen. Another threat we cannot rule out is terrorism. If we must err, let's err on the side of caution. The possible consequences are too horrible to contemplate. We cannot continue taking risks of this magnitude. According to the summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, dated July, 1999 on page S-6, "Methods to dispose of radioactive wastes have been 1 continued studied since the late 1950s." Let's first learn how to neutralize the present waste before we make another hideous mistake. It may be our last.

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